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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2006

In Today's Papers

Article 301 Controversy Continues

All papers: On Tuesday, the Turkish Parliament held an extraordinary session to discuss EU adaptation bills including Article 301 of the penal code, under which author Elif Safak is to appear before an Istanbul court on Thursday for "insulting Turkishness" in her new novel. Milliyet and Radikal say the ruling AK Party is divided on Article 301 with Foreign Minister Gul and chief EU negotiator Babacan saying the article should be revised and Justice Minister Cicek insisting there is no need to rush to change the law. "We are for the free expression of non-violent ideas," Gul stated. Gul was also quoted as saying article 301 had become a source of trouble. Prime Minister Erdogan agrees with Cicek and some other cabinet ministers that Turkey should wait to see the implementation of the controversial article before taking new steps.

The influential business organization TUSIAD had earlier called in a report for a change to Article 301. Radikal reminds that during a visit to Brussels on September 9, Minister Babacan had promised to amend the article if necessary. AKP lawmaker Irfan Gunduz said a regulation for amending Article 301 could be sent to the parliament in October.

The Turkish translators of American writer John Tirman's "Spoils of War: The Human Cost of America's Arms Trade," also faces trial for infringing Article 301. The publisher of the book, Fatih Tas, had also been on trial for insulting Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, as well as denigrating Turkishness, the republic and the parliament. The prosecutor demands prison sentences up to three years for translators Lutfi Taylan Tosun and Aysel Yildirim. Amnesty International's Turkey coordinator Claude Edelman said the lawsuit was "unprecedented."

Commentator Ismet Berkan writes in the liberal-intellectual Radikal that Turkey is in dire need of "changing mentalities before changing laws": We have to realize that the essence of the issue is about freedom of speech where nobody will face prison just because he or

she expressed an opinion. The Turkish government presents a stubborn attitude on this issue which does not indicate anything positive for the future."

Bush Slams Iran in Address to UN

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman and others report President Bush renewed his attacks on Iran and defended American action in the Middle East in a speech he delivered at the UN General Assembly yesterday. Bush accused Iran of developing nuclear weapons and sponsoring terrorism. Bush told the Iranians that their government was the greatest obstacle to "a future of liberty, prosperity, and warm ties with the United States."

International Automobile Federation (FIA) Fines Turkey \$5 Million
Sabah, Aksam, Vatan, Bugun, Zaman and others: Turkey's Grand Prix organizers were fined yesterday a record \$5million by the Formula One racing governing body for letting Turkish Cypriot President Mehmet Ali Talat present the winner's trophy at last month's race. At the ceremony, Talat was introduced as the President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), an entity recognized solely by Turkey. Sabah says that the fine should be paid by those who suggested using the F1 for a political show. Now, all eyes turned to Turkish Union of Chambers (TOBB) chairman Rifat Hisarciklioglu who had organized the ceremony and promised to pay the fine after the criticism.

Iraq Names Special Envoy for Countering the PKK

All papers report that Iraq has appointed a special envoy for countering the PKK. The Iraqi Ambassador to Turkey presented a note to the Foreign Ministry yesterday notifying Ankara that Iraq has appointed a special envoy. Vatan, Bugun and others report that Baghdad appointed Sunni retired General Amir Ahmed Hassun as special

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envoy. Ankara, reportedly, was pleased with the appointment.

Greece Leaves Illegal Immigrants in Turkish Waters

Hurriyet reports in a banner headline story that in May, a Turkish coastguard helicopter caught red-handed a Greek coastguard boat shoving overboard six Afghan immigrants off the Aegean town of Ayvalik in Turkish territorial waters. The immigrants, left on the sea without shovels, were seen as trying to steer with their hands the lifeboat toward the Turkish shore. In footage taken in July 2004, another Greek coastguard boat was seen by the Turkish coastguard leaving a boat full of 35 immigrants in Turkish territorial waters, according to Hurriyet.

Editorial: The Politicization of Religion

The chief editor of mass appeal Sabah, Mehmet Barlas commented: "Turkey has come to understand the politicization of Christianity, especially after the controversial remarks of the Pope. His remarks not only provoked an international reaction but also proved that political Islam, which we always considered a threat to secular-democratic system, was not alone -- the Pope represents political Christianity. In addition to the Pope, we can see clear traces of political Christianity in the world as President Bush represents strong Evangelism. Turkish opinion makers generally acted with prejudice by thinking Christianity was exempt from politicization. Recent incidents are very obvious examples demonstrating the fact that Christianity is not free from political ideology."

TV Highlights

NTV (7 A.M.)

Domestic News

- Turkish Justice Minister Cemil Cicek maintained the government was not planning to change the controversial Article 301 of the penal code.

- Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul met Greek counterpart Dora Bakoyannis in Istanbul to discuss the confidence-building measures adopted in May.

- Turkey's Diyanet-Sen labor union of clerics has filed a request to launch legal action against Pope Benedict XVI and to arrest the pontiff during his visit to Turkey in late November for defaming the Prophet Muhammad in a speech earlier last week.

- Energy Minister Hilmi Guler, testifying at the Supreme Court in connection with charges of irregularity against former energy ministers Zeki Cakan and Cumhur Ersumer, accused the two of inflicting losses on the public sector.

- Abdullah Demirbas, a district mayor in the mainly Kurdish city of Diyarbakir, has been acquitted in a lawsuit for making terrorist propaganda in a report on "local administrations in the light of a multilingual population" presented to the European Social Forum.

- Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality destroyed a mosque illegally built overnight by the residents of the Gaziosmanpasa district.

International News

- UNSYG Annan warned that Iraq is in danger of sliding into a "full-scale civil war".

- Greece is rewriting its history schoolbooks in an effort to fight chauvinism.

- The Taliban has announced they had killed a Turk abducted last month after the construction company he worked for ignored an

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ultimatum to leave Afghanistan. Independent sources did not confirm the killing.

- The European Commission said it is delaying the release of Turkey Progress Report by two weeks, until November 8, with an aim to give Ankara time to carry on with adjustment reforms.

- A report released by the Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) shows racism in the United States was up 29.6 percent from last year. The report depicts 1,972 cases of anti-Islamic violence, discrimination and harassment, the highest number ever recorded in the country.

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WILSON